



CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



IS
THIS
THE
FUTURE?



SMASHING THROUGH THE TIME BARRIER -- AHEAD
12 MILLION YEARS -- WILL THE CHALLENGERS
SURVIVE 'THE WAR AT
TIME'S END?



BUICKLER
F. SWACOA

SURVIVING A CATACLYSMIC AIRCRAFT CRASH THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FATAL--FOUR ADVENTURERS NOW CONSIDER THEMSELVES LIVING ON BORROWED TIME--FOUR MEN, JOINED BY A WOMAN IN LOVE WITH DANGER, NOW FACE ANY RISK--ANY PERIL--ANY FOE! TOGETHER THEY ARE--

CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN



Guest Starring **DEADMAN and SWAMP THING**

HIS NAME IS PROF. HALEY, AND HE'S A CHALLENGER. SINCE A BATTLE IN PERDITION, PENNSYLVANIA, HE'S BEEN WHEELCHAIR-BOUND, AND HE HATES IT.

HE LONGS FOR ACTION... FOR ADVENTURE SHARED WITH HIS FELLOW CHALLENGERS; BUT HE NEVER HOPED FOR... THIS!

FOR FURTHER BACKGROUND--KEEP READING. THINGS ARE ABOUT TO MOVE--!



JACK C.
HARRIS,
EDITOR

GERRY CONWAY (WRITER) * KEITH GIFFEN (PENCILS) * JOHN CELARDO (INKS) * GENE D'ANGELO (COLORS) 1

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THE WAR

CHAK

AT

T

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E

S

END

DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS UGLY CAME FROM--BUT IT'S CHOKING ME--!

HAVE TO BREAK FREE--

--BEFORE I PASS OUT!

HE WAS A DEEPSEA DIVER BEFORE THE NEAR-FATAL PLANE CRASH WHICH BOUND HIM TO HIS FELLOW CHALLENGERS--AND AS A DIVER, HE'S KNOWN FOR HIS SHOWN ENDURANCE--

--AND IT'S ALL HE CAN DO TO REACH THE EMERGENCY ARSENAL SET HIGH IN A WALL OF CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN'S MAIN LAB:

RED RYAN BUILT THIS FOR USE AGAINST AN ICE-AGE MAMMOTH WE ONCE FOUGHT--

--LET'S SEE HOW IT DOES AGAINST A FREAK-SIZED LIZARD!

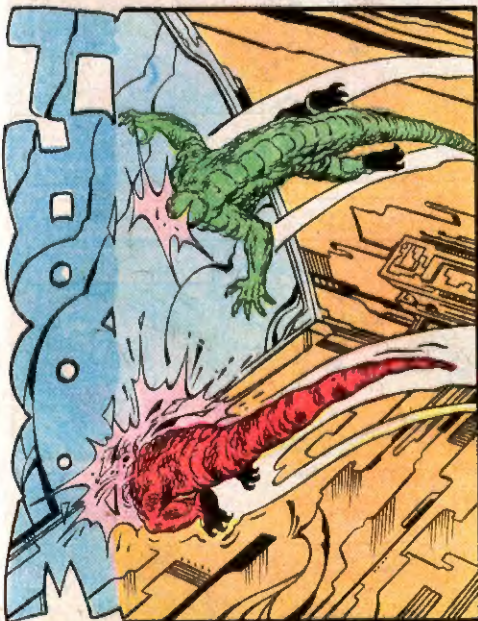
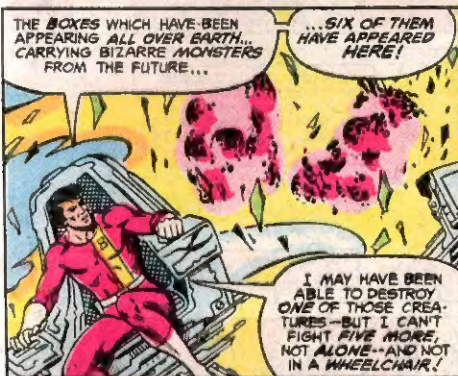
BULL'S-EYE! WHATEVER THAT THING WAS-- AND WHEREVER IT CAME FROM-- IT'S CLAWED ITS LAST CHALLENGER! WHICH RAISES THE \$128,000 QUESTION-- WHERE DID IT COME FROM, AND HOW DID IT GET INSIDE CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN?

THE ANSWER, PROF HALEY, IS CLOSER THAN YOU THINK...



THE BOXES WHICH HAVE BEEN APPEARING ALL OVER EARTH... CARRYING BIZARRE MONSTERS FROM THE FUTURE...

...SIX OF THEM HAVE APPEARED HERE!



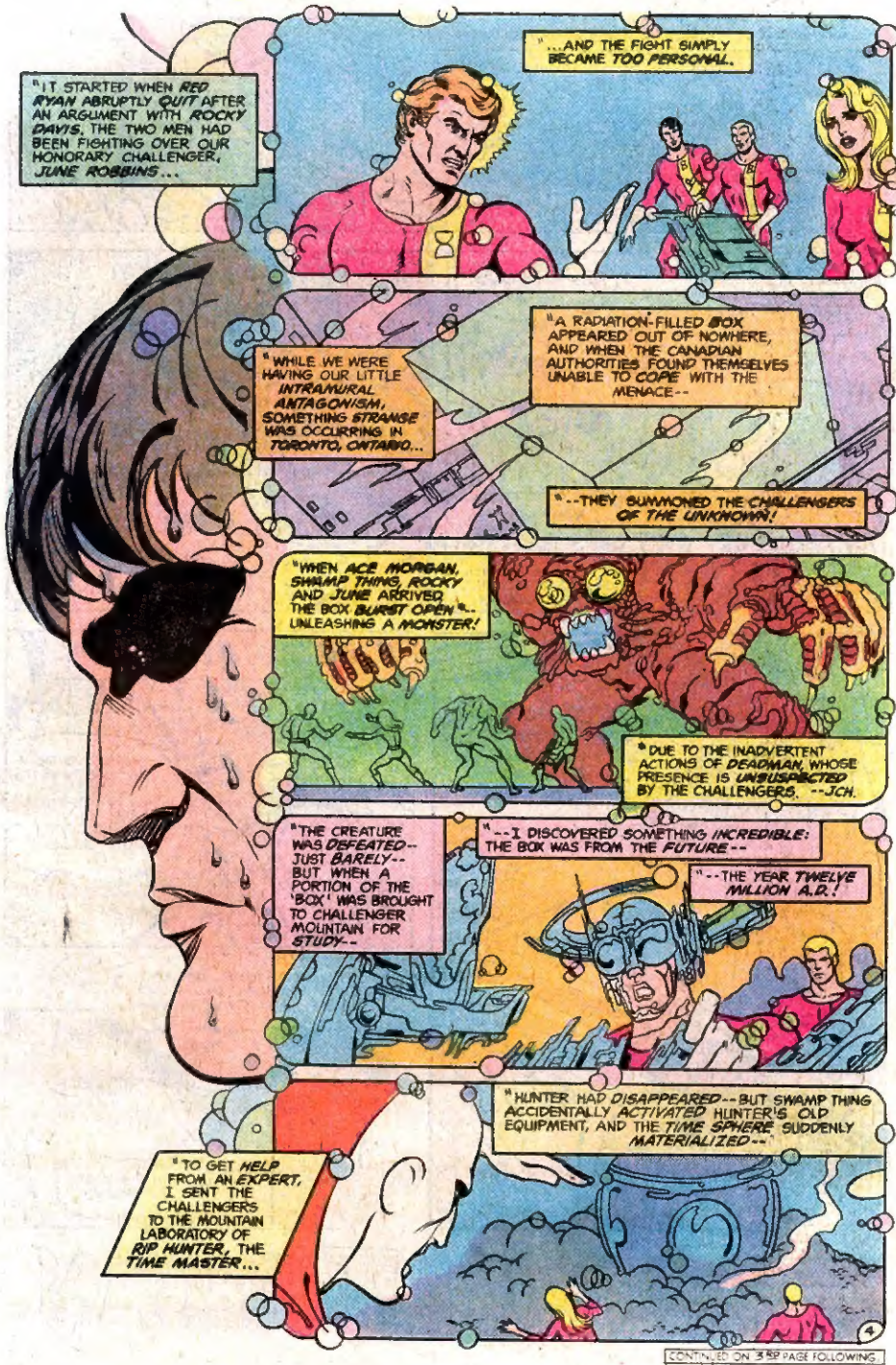
SILENCE... AND PROF HALEY SIGHS, FEELING WEARIER THAN HE'S EVER FELT BEFORE...



WAS IT ONLY A FEW HOURS AGO THAT IT ALL BEGAN? IT SEEMS LIKE CENTURIES... AND MAYBE, IN A WAY...



CHAPTER ONE: *The* WAY IT BEGAN



"IT STARTED WHEN RED RYAN ABRUPTLY QUIT AFTER AN ARGUMENT WITH ROCKY DAVIS. THE TWO MEN HAD BEEN FIGHTING OVER OUR HONORARY CHALLENGER, JUNE ROBBINS...

"...AND THE FIGHT SIMPLY BECAME TOO PERSONAL.

"WHILE WE WERE HAVING OUR LITTLE INTRAMURAL ANTAGONISM, SOMETHING STRANGE WAS OCCURRING IN TORONTO, ONTARIO...

"A RADIATION-FILLED BOX APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE, AND WHEN THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES FOUND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE MENACE--

"...THEY SUMMONED THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!

"WHEN ACE MORGAN, SWAMP THING, ROCKY AND JUNE ARRIVED, THE BOX BURST OPEN-- UNLEASHING A MONSTER!

"DUE TO THE INADVERTENT ACTIONS OF DEADMAN, WHOSE PRESENCE IS UNSUSPECTED BY THE CHALLENGERS, --JCH.

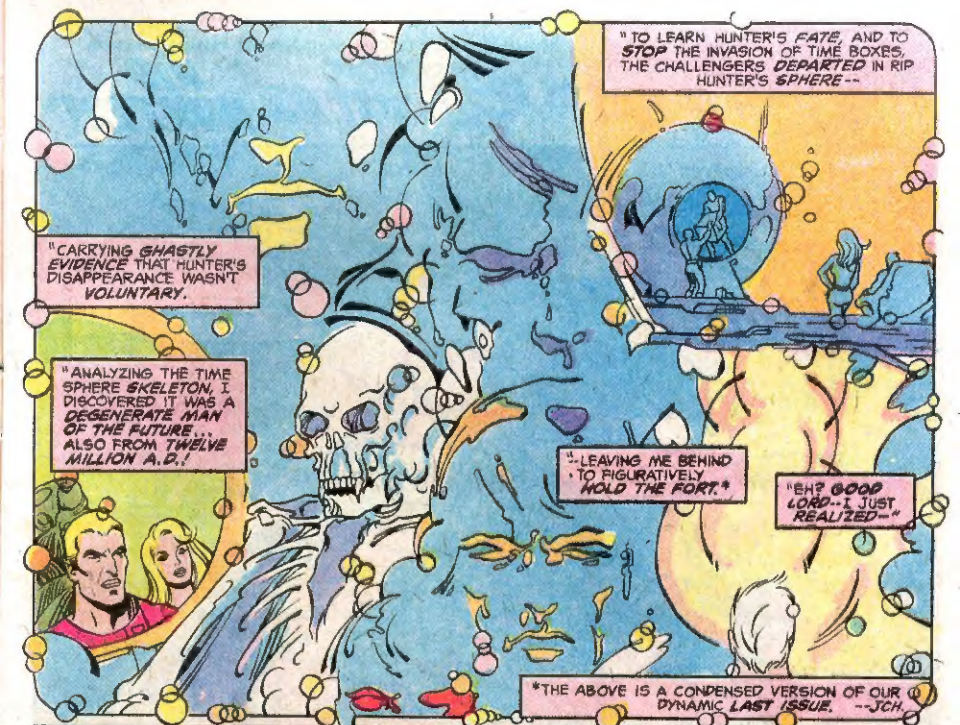
"THE CREATURE WAS DEFEATED-- JUST BARELY-- BUT WHEN A PORTION OF THE 'BOX' WAS BROUGHT TO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN FOR STUDY--

"--I DISCOVERED SOMETHING INCREDIBLE: THE BOX WAS FROM THE FUTURE--

"--THE YEAR TWELVE MILLION A.D.!

"TO GET HELP FROM AN EXPERT, I SENT THE CHALLENGERS TO THE MOUNTAIN LABORATORY OF RIP HUNTER, THE TIME MASTER...

"HUNTER HAD DISAPPEARED-- BUT SWAMP THING ACCIDENTALLY ACTIVATED HUNTER'S OLD EQUIPMENT, AND THE TIME SPHERE SUDDENLY MATERIALIZED--



"TO LEARN HUNTER'S FATE, AND TO STOP THE INVASION OF TIME BOXES, THE CHALLENGERS DEPARTED IN RIP HUNTER'S SPHERE--

"CARRYING GHASTLY EVIDENCE THAT HUNTER'S DISAPPEARANCE WASN'T VOLUNTARY.

"ANALYZING THE TIME SPHERE SKELETON, I DISCOVERED IT WAS A DEGENERATE MAN OF THE FUTURE... ALSO FROM TWELVE MILLION A.D.!

"LEAVING ME BEHIND
TO FIGURATIVELY HOLD THE FORT."

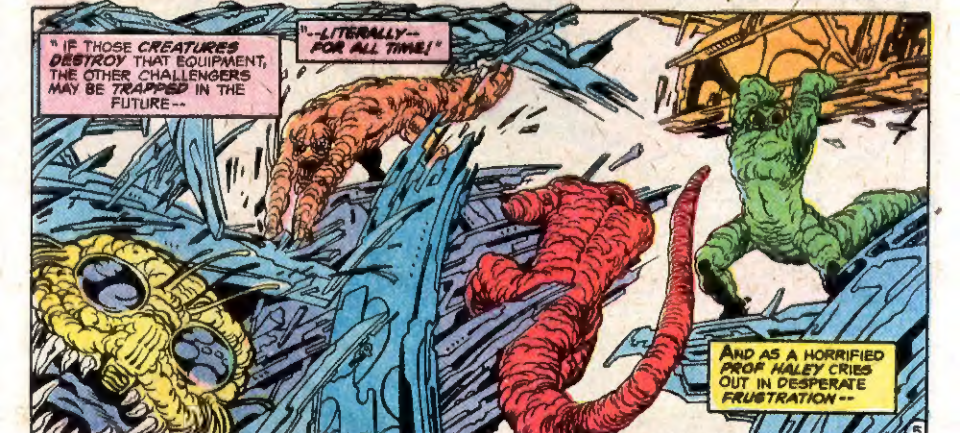
"EH? GOSH
LORD--I JUST REALIZED--"

"THE ABOVE IS A CONDENSED VERSION OF OUR DYNAMIC LAST ISSUE. --JCH.



ALL THE MONITORING EQUIPMENT I WAS USING TO KEEP TRACK OF THE TIME SPHERE ON ITS JOURNEY INTO THE FUTURE--

--IT'S INSIDE THE MAIN LAB!



"IF THOSE CREATURES DESTROY THAT EQUIPMENT, THE OTHER CHALLENGERS MAY BE TRAPPED IN THE FUTURE--

"--LITERALLY--
FOR ALL TIME!"

AND AS A HORRIFIED PROF HALEY CRIES OUT IN DESPERATE FRUSTRATION--

--WE'LL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN THE OTHER MEMBERS OF OUR CAST ALMOST TWELVE MILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE, WHERE THEY'RE DISCOVERING--

CHAPTER TWO: "IF THIS IS TOMORROW, YOU MUST BE RIP HUNTER!"

ATTENTION, INTERLOPERS! YOU HAVE TRESPASSED ON THE STREETS OF THE SACRED CITY, AND FOR YOUR CRIME--

--YOU ALL MUST DIE!

WE'VE COME ALL THIS WAY-- TO FIND THIS?

NO...LOOK AT HIS EYES... I SENSE HIS DEEPLY-BURIED PAIN-- LIKE MINE... THE AGONY OF LIVING A HELPLESS NIGHTMARE!

ACE, LOOK--THE GUY'S HYPNOTIZED!

EVEN A DEADMAN CAN SEE THAT ROCKY! GET MOVIN' BEFORE YOU BECOME GHOSTS, TOO!

RIP HUNTER-- A GESTAPO TYPE-- AND NOW HE'S GOING TO KILL US?

DOWN... ALL OF YOU... HE'S SHOOTING!

HEY!



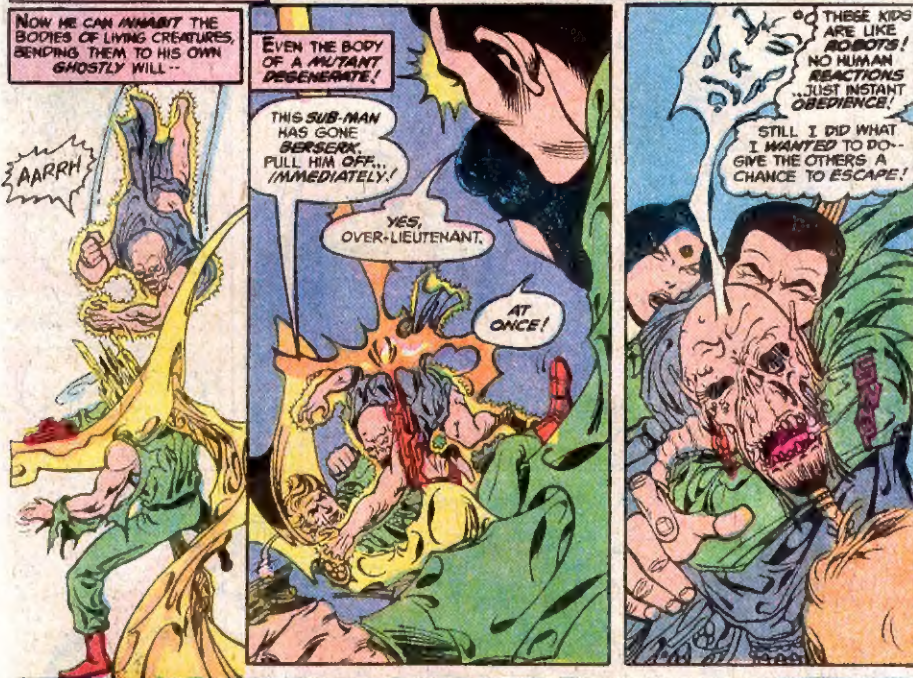
NO! HOLLAND IS HIT*... AND THE OTHERS'LL BE CHOPPED TO PIECES--

*THE SHOCK THING IS DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND, BRILLIANT BIOCHEMIST-- VICTIM OF A BIO-RESTORATIVE EXPERIMENT GONE WRONGS! --JCH



--UNLESS THIS OLD CIRCUS ACROBAT MAKES SOME FANCY MOVES--FAST!

STRUCK DOWN PREMATURELY BY AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET, DEADMAN WAS GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE AT "LIFE" BY THE GREAT BALANCE OF GOOD AND EVIL, RAMA KUSHNA--



NOW HE CAN INHABIT THE BODIES OF LIVING CREATURES, BENDING THEM TO HIS OWN GHOSTLY WILL--

EVEN THE BODY OF A MUTANT DEGENERATE!

THIS SUB-MAN HAS GONE BERSERK. PULL HIM OFF... IMMEDIATELY!

YES, OVER, LIEUTENANT.

AT ONCE!

THESE KIDS ARE LIKE ROBOTS! NO HUMAN REACTIONS... JUST INSTANT OBEDIENCE! STILL I DID WHAT I WANTED TO DO-- GIVE THE OTHERS A CHANCE TO ESCAPE!



AND THEY'RE TAKING IT! GO, GUYS, BEFORE HUNTER GETS BACK ON HIS FEET! THESE HUMAN MACHINES WON'T HIT YOU ON THEIR OWN--

GO!

BUT, BEFORE JUNE ROBBINS CAN REACH THE TIME SPHERE'S ENTRANCE--

THAT--IS--
FAR--ENOUGH--
OUTLINGS.

THAT--GIANT IS LIFTING
THE TIME SPHERE--AS
THOUGH IT WERE A
BUBBLE GUM MACHINE!

HE'S AS STRONG
AS SWAMP THING!

THE--SUNSET--LORDS--HAVE--
ORDERED--YOUR--CAPTURE.
YOU--WILL--SURRENDER--
OR--FACE--PERSUASION.

I DON'T CARE IF HE'S AS
STRONG AS A CRUMMY
TRUCK! I'VE WRESTLED
CROCODILES AND TIGERS--
AND I'VE STAYED IN THE
RING WITH THREE GUYS
AT ONCE--

--AND IF
BRUISER HERE
WANTS TO PLAY
GAMES WITH
THE TIME
SPHERE--

--HE'S ASKING FOR
A MOUTHFUL OF
LOOSE TEETH!

YAAAH!
MY HAND--!

I--AM--THE--PERSUADER--
OUTLING

IF--YOU--
REFUSE--TO--
SURRENDER--

YOU--MUST--
BE--PERSUADED!

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS A MASSACRE:
EVEN AS OLYMPIC WRESTLING CHAMP
ROCKY DAVIS FALLS STUNNED--

VALIANTLY, JUNE ROBBINS
ALSO RESISTS--AND DROPS--

--ACE MORGAN LEARNS THAT
A JET PILOT IS NO BETTER
FIGHTER THAN A PROFESSIONAL
ATHLETE!

-- FOLLOWED BY
THE WOUNDED
SWAMP THING,
WHO TRIES
DESPERATELY TO
LIFT HIMSELF AGAINST
BURNING ACHY--
AND FAILS!

ONLY THE UNSEEN
DEADMAN REMAINS
TO TAKE UP THE BAN-
NER, AND WHEN HE
ATTEMPTS TO ENTER
THE ROBOTIC
PERSUADER--

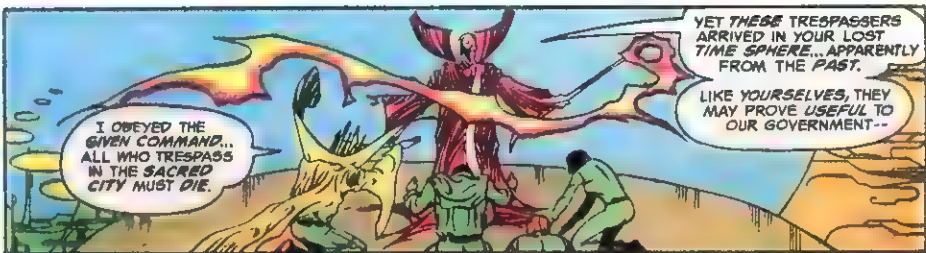
--HE FINDS THE CREATURE MORE
MACHINE THAN MAN!

I CAN'T TAKE
OVER A HUNK
OF SCRAP
METAL! THAT
OVERGROWN
CREEP HAS US
BEAT-COLD!

YOU HAVE PERFORMED WELL,
PERSUADER. BRING THE CAPTIVES
TO THE PITS FOR OUR STUDY.
AS FOR YOU, RIP HUNTER--

YOUR BEHAVIOR IS
A DISAPPOINTMENT!

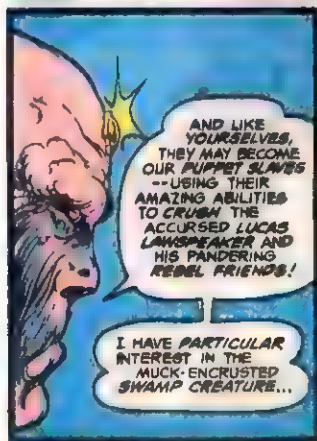
FORGIVE THIS
IGNORANT SLAVE,
SUNSET LORD.



I OBEYED THE GIVEN COMMAND... ALL WHO TRESPASS IN THE SACRED CITY MUST DIE.

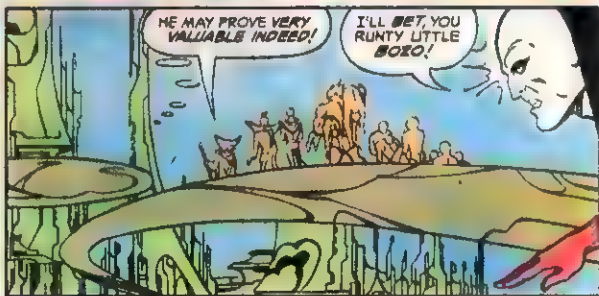
YET THESE TRESPASSERS ARRIVED IN YOUR LOST TIME SPHERE... APPARENTLY FROM THE PAST.

LIKE YOURSELVES, THEY MAY PROVE USEFUL TO OUR GOVERNMENT--



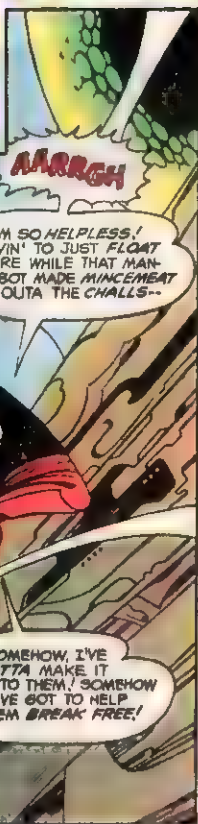
AND LIKE YOURSELVES, THEY MAY BECOME OUR PUPPET SLAVES --USING THEIR AMAZING ABILITIES TO CRUSH THE ACCURSED LUCAS LAWNSPEAKER AND HIS PANDERING REBEL FRIENDS!

I HAVE PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED SWAMP CREATURE...



HE MAY PROVE VERY VALUABLE INDEED!

I'LL BET, YOU RUNTLY LITTLE BOZO!



AARRGH

I'M SO HELPLESS! HAVIN' TO JUST FLOAT THERE WHILE THAT MAN-ROBOT MADE MINCEMEAT OUTA THE CHALLS--

SOMEHOW, I'VE GOTTA MAKE IT UP TO THEM! SOMEHOW --I'VE GOT TO HELP THEM BREAK FREE!



AND TO DO THAT, I'M GONNA NEED SOME ANSWERS ABOUT THIS WORLD, MAINLY ABOUT SOME REBEL JOKER NAMED LUCAS LAWNSPEAKER!

BEST PLACE TO FIND THOSE ANSWERS IS RIGHT DOWN THERE--



--AND THE BEST TIME TO START IS NOW!

MEANWHILE, BACK IN WHAT WE CALL
THE PRESENT, AT CHALLENGER
MOUNTAIN IN COLORADO--

THIS SELF-CONTAINED
COMBINATION
SPACE-SUIT AND
BATTLE ARMOR HAS
SPECIAL MOTORIZED
"MUSCLES" TO ALLOW
AN ASTRONAUT TO
OPERATE UNDER
HIGH GRAVITY.

IT'S NEVER BEEN PROPERLY
TESTED, BUT IF THE MOTORS
WORK THE WAY I HOPE,
THEY WILL--

DOOR LOCK
DISENGAGED

--THEY'LL GIVE ME
ARTIFICIAL STRENGTH
GREAT ENOUGH TO
SURVIVE A BATTLE
WITH THOSE
TIME-MONSTERS!

IF THE ARMOR
DOESN'T WORK--

--THERE WON'T
BE ENOUGH LEFT
OF IT OR ME TO
STICK A POSTAGE
STAMP ON!

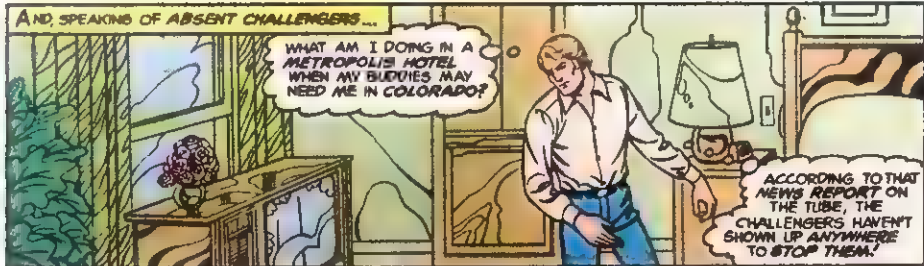
ROCKY, ACE,
JUNE--I WISH
YOU WERE HERE!

LORD, HOW I
NEED YOU--!

MEASURE OF A MAN EVEN WHEN THE ODDS
ARE INSURMOUNTABLE; HE GOES ON.
THAT'S HOW YOU MEASURE -- A HERO.

CHAPTER THREE:

TIME TIMES TERROR



WHAT AM I DOING IN A METROPOLIS HOTEL WHEN MY BUDDIES MAY NEED ME IN COLORADO?

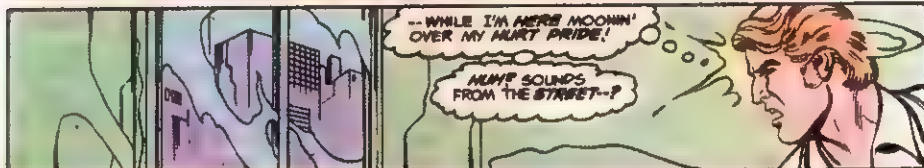
ACCORDING TO THAT NEWS REPORT ON THE TUBE, THE CHALLENGERS HAVEN'T SHOWN UP ANYWHERE TO STOP THEM!



AND KNOWING PROF HALEY, THEY PROBABLY BROUGHT IT BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN!

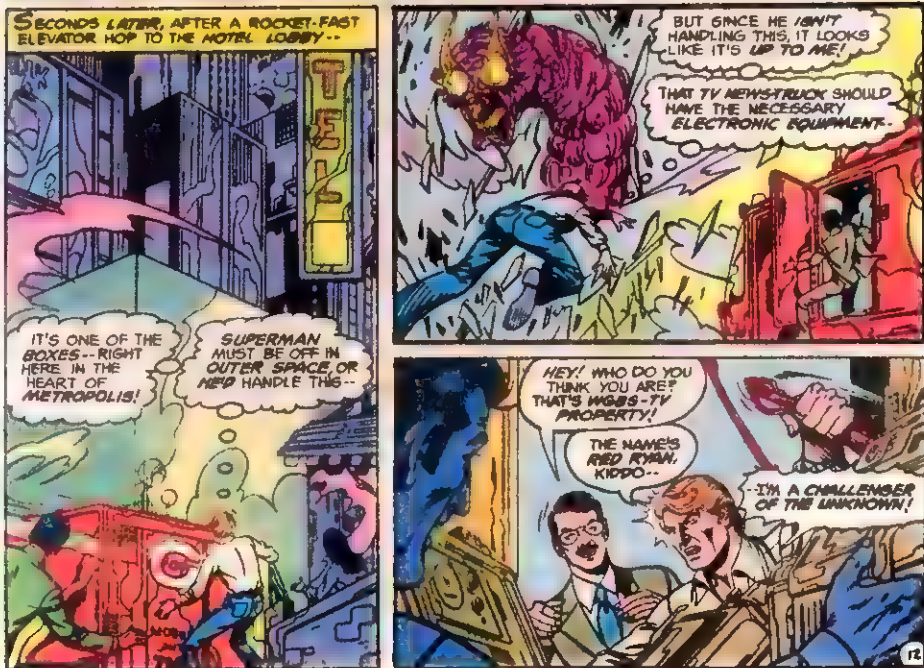
ONLY--NOW HUNDREDS OF THE BOXES ARE APPEARING EVERYWHERE--AND THE CHALLENGERS HAVEN'T SHOWN UP ANYWHERE TO STOP THEM!

MEANING--MY BUDDIES ARE IN TROUBLE--



--WHILE I'M HERE MOONIN' OVER MY HURT PRIDE!

HUNT SOUNDS FROM THE STREET--?



SECONDS LATER, AFTER A ROCKET-FAST ELEVATOR HOP TO THE HOTEL LOBBY--

IT'S ONE OF THE BOXES--RIGHT HERE IN THE HEART OF METROPOLIS!

SUPERMAN MUST BE OFF IN OUTER SPACE, OR HE'D HANDLE THIS--

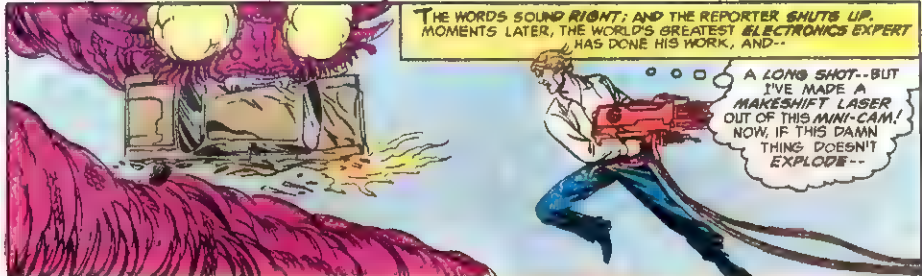
BUT SINCE HE ISN'T HANDLING THIS, IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S UP TO ME!

THAT TV NEWS-TRUCK SHOULD HAVE THE NECESSARY ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT--

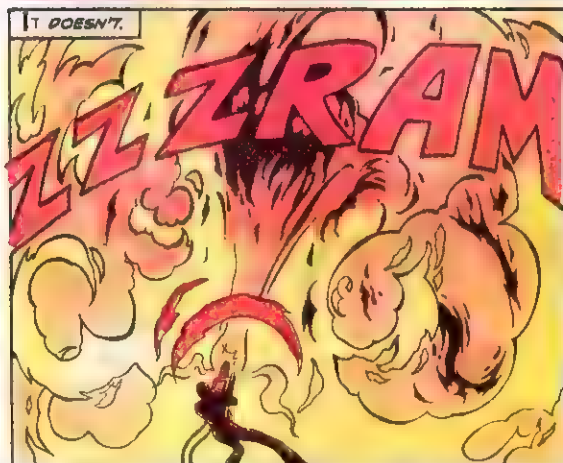
HEY! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? THAT'S WGBS-TV PROPERTY!

THE NAME'S RED RYAN, KIDDO--

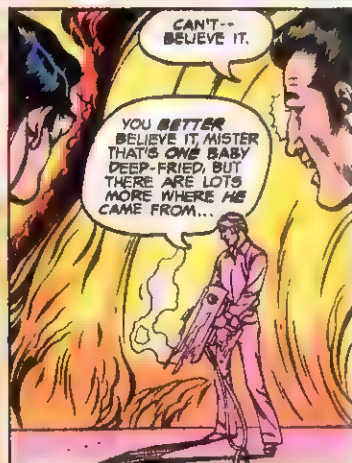
I'M A CHALLENGER OF THE UNKNOWN!



THE WORDS SOUND RIGHT; AND THE REPORTER SHUTS UP. MOMENTS LATER, THE WORLD'S GREATEST ELECTRONICS EXPERT HAS DONE HIS WORK, AND--



IT DOESN'T.



CAN'T-- BELIEVE IT.

YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT, MISTER. THAT'S ONE BABY DEEP-FRIED, BUT THERE ARE LOTS MORE WHERE HE CAME FROM...



...SO IF YOU GUYS WILL EXCUSE ME...

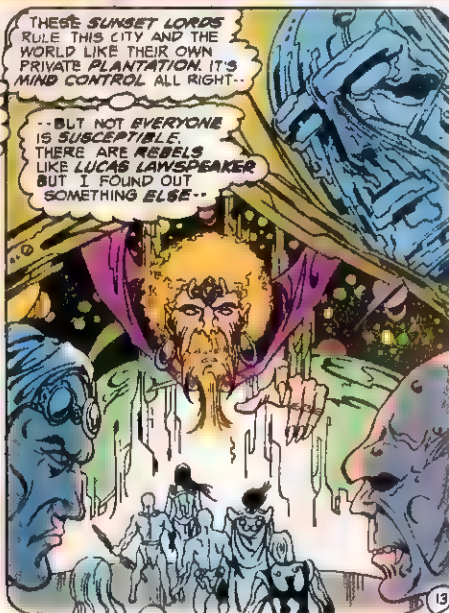
I'VE GOT TO CATCH A PLANE... TO COLORADO.



"AT THAT MOMENT, "TWELVE MILLION YEARS LATER..."

I'VE JUST SPENT SIX HOURS HOPPIN' FROM BODY TO BODY, SEARCHING THIS BURG HIGH AND LOW...

AND WHAT I'VE LEARNED... IS INCREDIBLE!



THESE SUNSET LORDS RULE THIS CITY AND THE WORLD LIKE THEIR OWN PRIVATE PLANTATION. IT'S MIND CONTROL ALL RIGHT...

--BUT NOT EVERYONE IS SUSCEPTIBLE. THERE ARE REBELS LIKE LUCAS LAWSPEAKER BUT I FOUND OUT SOMETHING ELSE--

"EVERYONE ON THIS WHOLE BLAMED PLANET IS NOW GROWN IN SOMETHIN' CALLED A GENE VAT, LIKE SOME KINDA HUMAN YEAST.

"NOT ONLY THAT, BUT PEOPLE ARE BRED TO FIT THEIR JOBS... LIKE THAT HALF-HUMAN MUTANT WHOSE SKELETON WE FOUND IN RIP HUNTER'S TIME SPHERE.

"HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SOLDIER - BRED FOR OBEYIN' ORDERS OF SUPERIORS, KILLING --AND NOTHIN' ELSE!

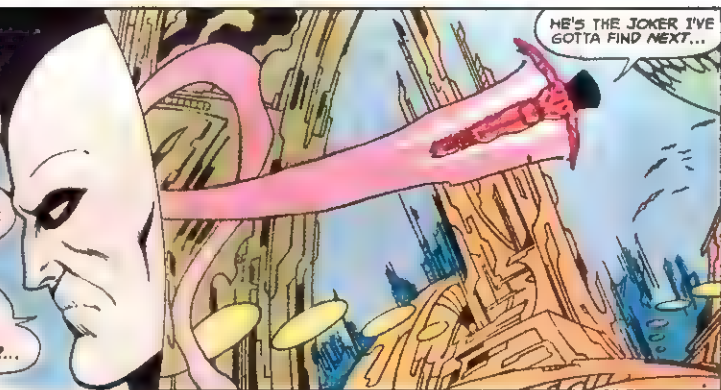
"THOSE CAVEMEN BESTIAFO TYPES ARE THE ARMY FOR THE GUYS WHO RULE THIS WORLD THE SUNSET LORDS. BUT THEY'RE ALSO SCIENCE ASSISTANTS, SINCE THE LORDS WON'T TRUST REGULAR HUMANS.

"SOMETHIN' THEY AND THE LORDS FOULED UP A GENE VAT - PRODUCIN' A WHOLE BUNCH OF MONSTERS WHICH THREATENED TO OVERTURN THE PLANET--

"--UNTIL RIP HUNTER SHOWED UP IN HIS TIME SPHERE, GIVIN' THE LORDS A READY-MADE SOLUTION TO THE MONSTER PROBLEM!

"USING HIS SUN STAFF THE HEAD LORD TOOK CONTROL OF RIP'S HANDS, FORCIN' HIM TO REVEAL HIS TIME TRAVEL SECRETS.

"NOW THE LORDS ARE SENDING THEIR GENETIC MONSTERS BACK THROUGH TIME TO OUR ERA IN THOSE CARDBOY BOXES...JUST LIKE A BUNCH OF KIDS SWEEPING DUST UNDER A BLAMED RUG!



SOON, THE
SUNSET LORDS
ARE GONNA REALIZE
THEY CAN EXPAND
THEIR RULE THROUGH
TIME...

WHEN THAT HAPPENS
...TWENTIETH CENTURY,
LOOK OUT!

THEY'VE GOTTA BE
STOPPED, AND THE
ONE GUY TRYING TO
DO IT IS CALLED
LUCAS LAWSPEAKER...

HE'S THE JOKER I'VE
GOTTA FIND NEXT...

DEEP WITHIN THE DARKEST DEPTHS OF THE WORLD
CITY'S TALLEST TOWER, THERE IS A PLACE CALLED
THE PITS; IT'S NOT A COLD PLACE OR A PARTICULARLY
SLIMY ONE...

...YET ALL THE SAME, IT IS A
DUNGEON... AND HERE OUR
HEROES LANGUISH, WATCHED
BY A SILENT SENTINEL...

...WHO NEITHER SPEAKS
NOR EVEN SEEMS TO
BREATHE...

HERE'S ANOTHER
FINE MESS I'VE GOT US
INTO... IF I HADN'T
ATTACKED THAT GUY, THEY
MIGHT HAVE JUST LOCKED
US UP...

CHAPTER 4 A PIT by ANY OTHER NAME

...INSTEAD OF
PARALYZIN'
US WITH
THESE
LIGHTS...

FORGET THE
RECRIMINATIONS,
ROCKY, NOBODY
BLAMES YOU.

ACTUALLY
YOU WERE
RATHER
BRAVE--FOR
A PUNCH
DRUNK
FIGHTER.

YEAH,
SURE--
THANKS.

NO MATTER WHAT YOU GUYS SAY, I KNOW THIS IS ALL MY FAULT-- SO I'M THE ONE WHO'S GOTTA TRY TO TEAR LOOSE OF THIS LIGHT BEAM!



ROCKY, DON'T! YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE TRIED IT BEFORE--

YEAH--NOTHIN'! JUST A LITTLE PAIN, THAT'S ALL! BUT A WRESTLER GETS USED TO PAIN, ACE! I CAN HANDLE THIS-- UNNNHH--



I CAN--BEAT THIS-- AAARRH-- I CAN--



I CAN--



OH, ROCKY...YOU POOR, COURAGEOUS FOOL! ACE...IS HE HURT...?

DON'T KNOW JUNE...IT LOOKS AS IF HE JUST PASSED OUT. THERE'S A HIGH-VOLTAGE ELECTRICAL CURRENT IN THESE BEAMS NOT ENOUGH TO KILL...

...BUT TOO MUCH EVEN FOR ROCKY DAVIS!



LOOK AT HIM, THAT LITTLE MAN... JUST WATCHING US, HE ENJOYED WATCHING ROCKY FAIL... AS THOUGH WE WERE INSECTS... TOYS...

NOT TOYS, JUNE HE'S TESTING US, TRYING TO SEE HOW STRONG AND SMART WE ARE THIS IS MORE THAN A GAME--

"BUT HOW MUCH MORE, AND TO WHAT ULTIMATE PURPOSE--ONLY HE REALLY KNOWS."



I'LL TELL YOU THIS, ACE. WHATEVER HE WANTS...

IT ISN'T GOOD.

ELSEWHERE...

EVERY LEAD I'VE FOUND
POINTS IN ONE DIRECTION...
THIS SLUM AREA THE LORDS
CALL BLACK ALLEY.

SCUTTLEBUTT SAYS THERE'S A
REBEL MEETING IN THAT "TENEMENT".
SO THAT'S WHERE I'M HEADED!

HUH! MY
INFORMERS
WEREN'T KIDDING!
MUST BE ENOUGH
BODIES HERE TO
PACK THE WHOLE
DAMNED PHILHARMONIC
HALL!

BUT WHERE'S THIS
LUCAS LAWSPEAKER I
HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT?

MAYBE I'D BETTER
JUST HANG AROUND
-- BE INCONSPICUOUS
TILL I GET THE
OLD LAY OF THE
LAND.

THIS HUSKY GUY
LOOKS LIKE A GOOD
HOST...

THINK I'LL JUST
MINGLE UNTIL I
FIND OUT WHO'S--

WHO THE--?

I AM IN
CHARGE,
BOSTON
BRAND.
YOU WHO
CALL YOURSELF
DEADMAN.
WELCOME TO
BLACK ALLEY...
WELCOME TO OUR
REBELLION.

FIRST LET ME ASSURE YOU,
YOUR FRIENDS THE CHALLENGERS
WILL BE AIDED BY THE FULL
FORCE OF OUR ORGANIZATION.
MY WORD ON IT.

AS FOR MY NAME, IT IS LUCAS,
BUT YOU CAN CALL ME--

LAWSPEAKER!

SWEET MOTHER OF
MERCY--HE'S
READING MY MIND!

AND ON THAT RATHER AMBIGUOUS NOTE WE MUST TAKE LEAVE OF OUR GHOSTLY CHALLENGER, KNOWING THAT
WE'LL REJOIN HIM NEXT ISSUE FOR THE CONCLUSION OF--

TWELVE MILLION YEARS TO TWILIGHT!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FOURTH WEEK IN MARCH



c/o DC COMICS, INC., 75 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

Dear Editor,

Let me herewith congratulate Gerry Conway. With **CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN #83**, Gerry has converted me into a regular reader. This conversion takes on added significance when you realize the only other **COTU** I've read was the previous issue, #82. Obviously, I am no staunch supporter from the Kirby days, whenever that was. During their run in the sixties, I pursued comics blissfully unaware of the Challengers. To me, back then, "Red" was a color, "Ace" was a card, "Rocky" was an adjective and "Prof" was another word for teacher. Being primarily a reader of the super-hero set back then, and finding no cross-over team-ups involving the Challengers, I saw no intelligent reason to buy any of their 80 books.

When the Challengers were revived in **SUPER-TEAM FAMILY**, I did not buy that book. Why should I? No, I continued my avoidance of their adventures. That is, up until I called the DC Hotline one day and Gerry Conway mentioned upcoming guest-stars in the **CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN: Swamp Thing, Deadman**, and my ol' buddy **Rip Hunter**. Frantically, I dashed out to try and snatch up **COTU #81** (it was already sold out.) However, when **#82** came, I was already sold out. That book was excellent, if only for the dynamic artwork of Mike Nasser.

When this book came out (**#83**), I was ready for more of the same from Mike. Instead, Keith Giffin handled the art chores. Now, Keith did some great work a while back for **ALL-STAR COMICS**, so I knew he had the tools, but still, I was a bit disappointed. While Conway could coast with Nasser behind him, he had to do a bang-up job this time to keep me interested. Needless to say, Conway came through in the clutch.

Taken just as itself, isolated from any previous issue that one might wish to compare it to, "Seven Doorways to Destiny" was one powerfully terrific story. With this tale, Gerry Conway has added a dimension to the identity of Dr. Alec Holland at which Len Wein could only muse, at which David Michelinie could only gape. Wein and Michelinie handled **Swamp Thing** as a monster with the mind of a man; Conway has handled **Swamp Thing** as a man with the body of a monster. There is a subtle difference there, and though both are equal in pathos, Conway has presented a side of **ST** that I had never seen before. I am quite impressed.

The story itself was splendid. Conway's ability here to chop 17 pages into four chapters, without cheating the reader, ought to be mimicked by the rest of comicdom. Put simply, the story **MOVED**. It had a definite purpose, it had a power-packed climax, and the ending tugged at the heart-strings. This is the type of comic book that has made Gerry Conway an important cog in the comics industry. If, as you say, the best is yet to come, then we

are in for quite a treat. Till next time then...

Dave Blanchard
2709 Woodside Dr.
Rockford, Ill. 61109

While our guest-stars were a definite selling point to you, Dave, it seems as if they had a different effect on some more sarcastic readers. Read on.—JCH

Dear Challengers,

The November issue of **QUEST-STAR FAMILY** appears as both entertaining and exciting. How nice it is to see Alec Holland as the **Swamp Thing** again, and how much nicer it will be to see **Deadman** and **Rip Hunter**. How clever it is to name the magazine after its hosts, a group of whose most awesome challenge is to guess which unknown and generally forgotten **DC** character it will be their duty to chaperone next. True, they only got into two pages of action this time (besides relaying obvious information and reciting incantations; things almost any nincompoop chosen at random could do as well), and look at the refreshing change from the **HOUSE OF SECRETS**, which hates its caretaker, Abel.

I do prefer terse narration and dialogue to the long-winded story-telling that I too often see. That is why I consider the style of this issue a vast improvement over last issue. Keith Giffin's sleek art job is the type which brought me much pleasure in **ALL-STAR COMICS**, but I feel that Sherman and Nasser are more adept at the supernatural illustrations.

What really bugs me is that you can't keep up in your lettercol with mail on issues four months old. Come on, how can I wait over four months to see if my letters are printed?

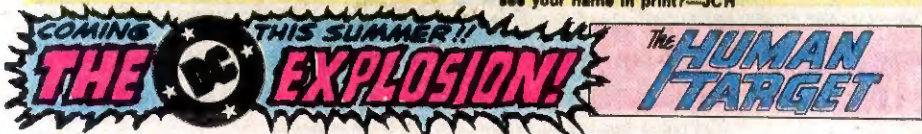
Before I sign off, let me explore an editorial policy. Did you have to make Dr. Holland perminately revert back to the **Swamp Thing** just to perform a two-page act of burning M'Nagala? You know, I kind of feel sorry for the guy, spending his whole life looking like that, and he doesn't even have his own book where others will see him. Unless you are planning to revive the series, you have committed an injustice.

Here's an idea: Instead of one-shots of defunct heroes resting in limbo, lets see more of those old defilers of death, the Challengers of the Unknown.

Sammuel Herakovitz
(no address given)

We hope you feel the **CHALLENGERS** are doing there part by now, Sam, and we also hope you realize that, for the time being, **THIS IS SWAMP THING'S** home. If there is a chance of him returning on his own, we thought we'd better present him as **SWAMP THING** since we see little chance of readers being enthralled by "The Adventures of Alec Holland."

It's next to impossible to keep our letter columns up to date as you request. We have to have them to our type-setters and back at the same time the art goes to the printers. We're typing this page up on October 7, 1977 and the book won't hit the stands until January 26, 1978. It's impossible to run letters about issue #85 here since it won't go on sale until November 22—more than a month from this writing. But isn't it worth the wait to see your name in print?—JCH



MORE SECRET ORIGINS!

"ROOTS" OF THREE MORE HEROES REVEALED IN SUPER-SPECIAL

(DC, New York)—Last year's **SECRET ORIGINS OF SUPER-HEROES** was so popular that we're starting off the new year with another edition, this time featuring three of the most demanded origin stories of all.

First, there's the full story of the **Black Canary**: her beginnings on Earth-2 and her career there, her move to Earth-1 and her career with **Green Arrow**. "The Canary is a Bird of Prey" is by Gerry Conway and Mike Vosburg.

Then, Conway joins with Don Newton to reveal the origin of **Lightyear** of the **New Gods**.

And finally, Paul Levitz, Joe Staton and Mike Nasser combine to present the origin of **Doctor Fate** in "This Immortal Destiny!"

It's a special you won't want to miss, so be at your comics dealer's for **SECRET ORIGINS OF SUPER-HEROES** when it goes on sale the week of January 30th.

GRAVEDIGGER FACES "CHOICE OF DEATHS"

(Europe, World War II)—**Gravedigger's** mission is to invade a Nazi stronghold and recover a painting in "A Choice of Deaths" by Roger McKenzie, Dick Ayers and Romeo Tanghal. But our hero has to face a variety of dooms before he can even get close to accomplishing his mission and that's what this story is all about.

And also in **MEN OF WAR #6**, Cary Burkett and Jerry Grandenetti present the third installment in the blockbuster feature, **Dateline: Frontline**, with the story "Countdown!"

The issue goes on sale the week of January 30th!



DIRECT CURRENTS

ON SALE WEEK OF JANUARY 30th
ACTION COMICS #482—Amazo's going to destroy the world and "This is a Job for Supermobile" by Cary Bates, Curt Swan and Francisco Chiaramonte.

DOORWAY TO NIGHTMARE #3—Can anyone love a vampire? Bill Kunkel, Ric Estrada and Romeo Tanghal answer the question in "Blood Red Tear!"

JONAH HEX #12—Jonah ventures into the everglades to "Search For 'Gator Hawes'" in this Michael Fleisher/Vicente Alcazar collaboration.

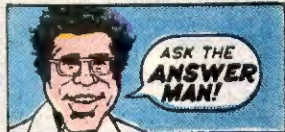
JUSTICE LEAGUE #154—The JLA members face a villain who threatens "I'll Kill You in Your Dreams" by Gerry Conway, Dick Dillin and Frank McLaughlin.

STAR HUNTERS #4—The quest continues in "First Blood" by David Michelinie, Rich Buckler and Bob Layton.

STEEL #2—The Indestructible Man faces "The Man Who Mined Miracles" in a Gerry Conway/Don Heck/Joe Giella collaboration.

WONDER WOMAN #242—World War II ends, Steve Trevor is kidnapped by a spaceship and Jack C. Harris takes over as writer in "Tomorrow's Gods and Demons!" Art by Jose Delbo and Vince Colletta.

AND ON SALE RIGHT NOW:
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN #86/GREEN LANTERN #103/SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS #14/SUPERBOY & THE



Q: What year was **DETECTIVE COMICS** started?—Doug Wood. **A:** 'TEC#1 was dated March, 1937.

Q: How many heroes has DC created since the beginning, including those who have retired, died, and gone into comics limbo?—Steve Fink. **A:** That's a question I could answer if I had a few months to do the research. The number, in any event, would be up in the hundreds, maybe even over 1,000!

Q: Will any of the old **Superman** artists return to draw new adventures?—Den Petilli. **A:** If you mean Joe Shuster or Wayne Boring, the answer is probably no. But Curt Swan and Kurt Schaffenberger have been handling the Man of Steel for years . . . and still do so!

Q: Who is the man who repaired Robotman in **SHOWCASE #94**?—Donald Reynolds. **A:** That master of Metal Men, Doctor Will Magnus!

Q: Will the **ORIGINAL SWAMP THING SAGA** become a regular series?—Paul O'Connor. **A:** There are no plans for it right now, but you never can tell.

Q: Will **Metamorpho** ever team up with the JLA again?—Tony Reyes. **A:** As with the above question, there are no plans now, but anything is possible!

Q: Will **Metamorpho** ever team up with the JLA again?—Tony Reyes. **A:** As with the above question, there are no plans now, but anything is possible!

LEGION #238/UNKNOWN SOLDIER #214/WARLORD #12/WITCHING HOUR #79/WORLD'S FINEST #250